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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/676,936	10/01/2003	Vincent A. White	GP-302531	7848
7590	03/24/2005		EXAMINER	
CHRISTOPHER DEVRIES General Motors Corporation Legal Staff, Mail Code 482-C23-B21 P.O. Box 300 Detroit, MI 48265-3000			NGUYEN, TU MINH	
			ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
			3748	
			DATE MAILED: 03/24/2005	

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

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Office Action Summary	Application No.	Applicant(s)	
	10/676,936	WHITE ET AL.	
	Examiner	Art Unit	
	Tu M. Nguyen	3748	

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

1) Responsive to communication(s) filed on 09 March 2005.
 2a) This action is **FINAL**. 2b) This action is non-final.
 3) Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

4) Claim(s) 1-7 and 9-17 is/are pending in the application.
 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
 5) Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
 6) Claim(s) 1-7 and 9-17 is/are rejected.
 7) Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
 8) Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

9) The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
 10) The drawing(s) filed on 21 January 2005 is/are: a) accepted or b) objected to by the Examiner.
 Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
 Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
 11) The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

12) Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
 a) All b) Some * c) None of:
 1. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 2. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 3. Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

1) Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
 2) Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
 3) Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08)
 Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____.
 4) Interview Summary (PTO-413)
 Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____.
 5) Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
 6) Other: _____.

DETAILED ACTION

1. An Applicant's Request for Continued Examination (RCE) filed on March 9, 2005 has been entered. Per instruction from the RCE, an Applicant's Amendment filed on January 21, 2005 has been entered. Claims 1 and 7 have been amended. Overall, claims 1-7 and 9-17 are pending in this application.

Drawings

2. The formal drawing of Figure 3 filed on January 21, 2005 has been approved for entry.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

3. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office Action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

4. Claims 12-16 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Ito et al. (U.S. Patent 5,655,363).

Re claims 12 and 16, as shown in Figures 1-4 and 7, Ito et al. disclose an engine control system for an internal combustion engine, comprising:

- a fuel injector (6) for introducing fuel into the internal combustion engine;

- a controller (5) for controlling the amount of fuel injected into the internal combustion engine by the fuel injector;

- an exhaust manifold (13) coupled to the internal combustion engine;

- a three-way catalytic converter (14) coupled to the exhaust manifold; and

- an oxygen sensor (15) coupled to the catalytic converter;

wherein the controller dithers the air-fuel ratio about stoichiometry based on the oxygen sensor and introduces a fuel enrichment pulse to periodically sweep the air-fuel ratio across stoichiometry, the fuel enrichment pulse introduction based upon the rate of sulfur reaction with the three-way catalytic converter (see steps S83-S85 in Figure 4, Figure 7, lines 50-56 of column 12, and line 52 of column 10 to line 5 of column 11).

Ito et al., however, fail to disclose that instead of the air-fuel ratio, the controller dithers the equivalence ratio about stoichiometry.

Ito et al. disclose the claimed invention except for utilizing equivalence ratio as an indicator of an exhaust gas property. It would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to use equivalence ratio in Ito et al., since the examiner takes Official Notice of the equivalence of "air-fuel ratio" and "equivalence ratio" for their use in the exhaust gas treatment art (i.e., equivalence ratio is simply the ratio of stoichiometric air-fuel ratio (i.e., 14.7) and an air-fuel ratio of an air fuel mixture), and the selection of any of these known equivalents would be within the level of ordinary skill in the art.

Re claims 13-15, the system of Ito et al. discloses the invention as cited above, however, fails to disclose that the internal combustion engine is at least one of an overhead valve engine, an overhead cam engine, and a rotary engine.

Some of the internal combustion engines for vehicles are designed to be of the rotary type to improve engine performance because of the absence of end-of-excursion power loss as the movable parts in rotary engines do not reverse direction. Other engines are configured with overhead cam or valve to achieve a compact engine and to improve volumetric efficiency. Therefore, such disclosures by Ito et al. are notoriously well known in the art so as to be proper for official notice. It would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention was made, to have configured the engine of Ito et al. to be of at least one of an overhead valve engine, an overhead cam engine, and a rotary engine, since the use thereof is routinely utilized by most workers in the art of internal combustion engines for vehicles.

5. Claim 17 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Ito et al. as applied to claim 12 above, in view of Andersen et al. (U.S. Patent 6,634,169).

The system of Ito et al. discloses the invention as cited above, however, fails to disclose that the sulfur is removed from cerium molecules in the catalytic converter.

As shown in Figure 1, Andersen et al. teach a method and a system for maintaining efficiency of a three-way catalyst (TWC) (6) by performing periodic enrichment of the air-fuel ratio and adding secondary air to the exhaust gas so that oxidation of the unburned fuel can occur over the TWC thereby raising the TWC temperature to a sufficiently high temperature to reduce sulfur poisoning of the TWC. As indicated on lines 9-35 of column 1 and claimed in claim 2,

Andersen et al. further teach that it is conventional in the art to utilize a TWC containing cerium compounds; and that sulfur purge is necessary to desorb the SO_x adsorbed by the cerium compounds. It would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention was made, to have utilized the TWC taught by Andersen et al. in the system of Ito et al., since the use thereof would have been routinely practiced by those with ordinary skill in the art.

6. Claims 1-7 and 9-11 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Ito et al. in view of Andersen et al.

Re claims 1 and 7, as shown in Figures 1-4 and 7, Ito et al. disclose a method of controlling the equivalence ratio in an internal combustion engine having a three-way catalytic converter (14), comprising:

- dithering the air-fuel ratio about a stoichiometric setpoint;
- controlling the air-fuel ratio with an oxygen sensor (15); and
- periodically introducing a fuel enrichment pulse in the internal combustion engine to sweep the air-fuel ratio across stoichiometry to remove sulfur from the three-way catalytic converter (see steps S83-S85 in Figure 4, Figure 7, lines 50-56 of column 12, and line 52 of column 10 to line 5 of column 11),

wherein the oxygen sensor (15) is a discrete switching oxygen sensor.

Ito et al., however, fail to disclose that instead of the air-fuel ratio, the controller dithers the equivalence ratio about stoichiometry; and that the fuel enrichment pulse is controlled to clean the cerium oxides oxygen storage sites in the three-way catalytic converter.

Ito et al. disclose the claimed invention except for utilizing equivalence ratio as an indicator of an exhaust gas property. It would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to use equivalence ratio in Ito et al., since the examiner takes Official Notice of the equivalence of "air-fuel ratio" and "equivalence ratio" for their use in the exhaust gas treatment art (i.e., equivalence ratio is simply the ratio of stoichiometric air-fuel ratio (i.e., 14.7) and an air-fuel ratio of an air fuel mixture), and the selection of any of these known equivalents would be within the level of ordinary skill in the art.

As shown in Figure 1, Andersen et al. teach a method and a system for maintaining efficiency of a three-way catalyst (TWC) (6) by performing periodic enrichment of the air-fuel ratio and adding secondary air to the exhaust gas so that oxidation of the unburned fuel can occur over the TWC thereby raising the TWC temperature to a sufficiently high temperature to reduce sulfur poisoning of the TWC. As indicated on lines 9-35 of column 1 and claimed in claim 2, Andersen et al. further teach that it is conventional in the art to utilize a TWC containing cerium compounds; and that sulfur purge is necessary to desorb the SO_x adsorbed by the cerium compounds. It would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention was made, to have utilized the TWC taught by Andersen et al. in the method of Ito et al., since the use thereof would have been routinely practiced by those with ordinary skill in the art.

Re claims 2 and 3, the modified method of Ito et al. discloses the invention as cited above, however, fails to disclose that the step of varying an equivalence ratio setpoint between a rich and a lean state characterized as a periodic function comprises varying the equivalence ratio

between 0.9 and 1.1; and that the magnitude of the fuel enrichment pulse at least enriches the equivalence ratio by 0.1.

Ito et al. disclose the claimed invention except for specifying an optimum range of equivalence ratio setpoint between 0.9 and 1.1 and for specifying an optimum range of a fuel enrichment pulse that enriches the equivalence ratio by a magnitude of at least 0.1. It would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to provide specific optimum ranges of equivalence ratio setpoint and of fuel enrichment pulse magnitude, since it has been held that where the general conditions of a claim are disclosed in the prior art, discovering the optimum or workable ranges involves only routine skill in the art. *In re Aller*, 105 USPQ 233.

Re claim 4, in the modified method of Ito et al., the fuel enrichment pulse is added periodically based on the rate of sulfur poisoning of the three-way catalytic converter (step S85 is performed only when the answer in step S84 is YES).

Re claims 5 and 9, the modified method of Ito et al. further comprises determining the equivalence ratio of the internal combustion engine using an oxygen sensor (15).

Re claims 6, 10, and 11, in the modified method of Ito et al., the oxygen sensor (15) generates a discrete analog signal.

Communication

7. Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Examiner Tu Nguyen whose telephone number is (571) 272-4862.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Mr. Thomas E. Denion, can be reached on (571) 272-4859. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is (703) 872-9306.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).

Tu M. Nguyen

TMN

Tu M. Nguyen

March 21, 2005

Primary Examiner

Art Unit 3748